

Race to the Top –Early Learning Challenge Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions

Addendum October 3, 2011

A. Introduction and Eligible Entities

A-4a. May a Governor’s Office serve as the Lead Agency?

Yes. As indicated in FAQ A-4, the Governor designates the Lead Agency to administer the grant. The Lead Agency must be a Participating State Agency. States may include other agencies beyond those required agencies listed under the definition in the NIA and application, so long as the optional agencies also meet the definition of Participating State Agency. If the Governor’s Office meets the definitions of “Lead Agency” and “Participating State Agency” (in other words, administers public funds related to early learning and development and is participating in the State Plan as indicated in the definition of Participating State Agency), then the Governor’s Office may serve as the Lead Agency.

B. General Application and Program Information

B-7. How can States ensure that Head Start programs are involved in the activities proposed in their State’s plan?

On July 20, 2011, the Office of Head Start in the Department of HHS issued a program instruction encouraging Head Start programs to participate to the fullest extent possible in their State’s RTT-ELC application. The information in that program instruction, which can be accessed through the following link, should also be useful to States in planning for the involvement of Head Start programs in their RTT-ELC activities.

http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Head%20Start%20Program/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Pis/2011/resour_pri_003_071311.html

States and Head Start grantees should be mindful of Head Start program performance standards and other regulations in order to avoid any potential conflicts and maximize the participation of Head Start grantees in their State. Head Start programs may seek guidance from the Office of Head Start regarding clarification of existing Head Start policies and regulations; however, Federal staff cannot comment on specific activities proposed in a State’s application.

B-8. May States include “kith and kin” care providers in their proposed plans and activities?

A State may include “kith and kin” care providers, also known as “family, friend, and neighbor care,” in their State Plan.

D. Application Review and Selection

D-4a. Will reviewers' comments for all applications be made public?

Yes. The Departments plan to post reviewers' comments for each application – both successful and unsuccessful applications -- on the RTT-ELC Web site soon after the conclusion of the competition. The names of the reviewers will be redacted.

D-6. Will the Departments announce what States submitted Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge applications?

Yes, the Departments will announce the names of the States that submitted applications. We will make the announcement soon after the deadline for applications (October 19, 2011).

D-7. How many reviewers will review each application?

Each application will be reviewed and scored by a panel of five non-Federal reviewers.

D-8. Will peer reviewers review only portions of a State's application?

All peer reviewers will review each full application assigned to them and not just select sections.

D-9. How will the scoring rubric for reviewers be used?

The purpose of the scoring rubric is to help ensure consistency among reviewers by giving them clear, common, written guidance on factors to consider when scoring applications against each selection criterion and the priorities. The selection criteria and priorities that appear in the rubric are identical to those that appear in the NIA. For more detail, see Appendix B, Scoring Rubric, published in the NIA.

D-10. How will reviewers judge the relationship between a State's current status and its High-Quality Plans?

The scoring rubric provides guidance to reviewers on how to allocate points when assessing the quality of both High-Quality Plans and existing implementation. The quality and implementation rubric directs reviewers to consider the degree of a State's implementation under a given selection criterion in relation to the quality of the applicant's response. High-quality responses are rewarded over low-quality responses and elements that are fully implemented and are of high quality are rewarded over plans that are fully implemented but are of lower quality.

E. Selection Criteria

E-6. In Table (A)(1)-4, States are asked to provide data on State spending and State contributions for early learning and development. In providing the data, should a State only list State government funding, or may it include Federal, local, and private funding?

In Selection Criterion (A)(1)(a), applicants are asked to provide evidence of the State’s past financial investment in early learning and development by filling out Table (A)(1)-4. In this table, States should provide data on funding from State expenditures for each of the past five State fiscal years (beginning in 2007). States may use appropriations data for fiscal year 2011 if actual expenditures are not available. This table should not include Federal funding as Federal funding is not part of the demonstrated commitment to early learning and development that is requested in the Selection Criterion (there are some limited exceptions described in E-7). There may be instances in which a State would like to include some local or private funding data that demonstrate the State’s commitment and investment in early learning and development. In these cases, the State should add a row to the table and clearly indicate for the reviewers the source of the funding and should elaborate on that information in the narrative for (A)(1) (there are some limited exceptions where local or private funding can be included without adding a separate row, as described in E-7).

See response to FAQ E-7 for additional information on how CCDF and TANF data should be addressed in Table (A)(1)-4.

Note: In the Application (p. 27) the title for Table (A)(1)-4 was incorrect in the list of evidence for (A)(1). The correct information should be “The completed table that shows the amount of funding for early learning and development for each of the past 5 years (2007-2011).”

E-7. Can you provide additional information about how applicants should fill out the CCDF and TANF cells in Table (A)(1)-4? Specifically, on the lines related to State funding of programs, should a State list only State government funding, or should the State also include local and private funding?

In Table (A)(1)-4, “State” is intended to refer to contributions from State funds, with two important exceptions. For the two items in Table (A)(1)-4 related to CCDF (“*Total State contributions to CCDF*” and “*State match to CCDF*”), the State should include any funding that the State counts towards CCDF State Match and CCDF Maintenance-of-Effort (MOE) requirements under Federal rules, including local public funding or private donated funding. Applicants should also note that the amount provided in the row labeled “*State match to CCDF*” is a subset of the previous row labeled “*Total contributions to CCDF*” since some States fund child care above and beyond CCDF Match requirements. We have provided that second row in Table (A)(1)-4 specifically on CCDF Match in order for States to report the amount of their CCDF match and to indicate whether or not they meet the amount of matching contributions required to draw down all available Federal CCDF funds. We encourage States to include a footnote in Table (A)(1)-4 that describes the funding sources (e.g., local, private) used to meet CCDF Match and CCDF MOE requirements.

For the item related to TANF (“*TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs*”), this amount should include any Federal or State TANF spending for child care or early learning and development programs. This includes TANF transfers to CCDF as well as direct TANF spending on child care through both assistance and non-assistance.

Note: We are aware that there may be overlap or double-counting in some categories in Table (A)(1)-4. For example, State-funded preschool programs are listed separately but may also be included as part of the CCDF match if the State uses State Pre-K as Match for CCDF in accordance with Federal rules. There may also be overlap in State funding claimed for CCDF MOE and TANF MOE.

E-8. In Table (A)(1)- 4 should States exclude funding under CCDF programs that support services to school-age children, and in Table (A)(1)- 5 should they exclude participation data for those children?

In Table (A)(1)-4, States should include CCDF funding for children of all ages, including school-age children. States may not have the ability to report funding by age; therefore, we are asking for the total CCDF funding in this table.

However, in Table (A)(1)-5, States should report only children from birth to kindergarten entry; they should not report school-age children. States collect data on the ages of children served by CCDF and thus have the ability to report figures that are limited to young children.

E-9. What does the term “Indian lands” mean as used in the definition of Children with High Needs?

The definition of “Children with High Needs” refers to children who reside on “Indian lands” as that term is defined by section 8013 of the ESEA. This is a statutory term used in Title VIII of the ESEA, which authorizes ED's Impact Aid program. Section 8013 defines “Indian lands” as follows:

“[R]eal property that is not subject to taxation by any State or any political subdivision of a State due to Federal agreement, law, or policy, and that is—

- (I) held in trust by the United States for individual Indians or Indian tribes;
- (II) held by individual Indians or Indian tribes subject to restrictions on alienation imposed by the United States;
- (III) conveyed at any time under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.] to a Native individual, Native group, or village or regional corporation;
- (IV) public land owned by the United States that is designated for the sole use and benefit of individual Indians or Indian tribes; or
- (V) used for low-rent housing, as described in Section 8013 (10), that is located on land described in subclause (I), (II), (III), or (IV) of this clause or on land that met one of those descriptions immediately before such property's use for such housing; or

(F) [A]ny real property located in the State of Oklahoma that--

(i) is owned by an Indian housing authority and used for low-income housing (including housing assisted under or authorized by the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 [25 U.S.C. 4101 et seq.]); and

(ii) at any time--

(I) was designated by treaty as tribal land; or
(II) satisfied the definition of Federal property under section 403(1)(A) of the Act of September 30, 1950 (Public Law 874, 81st Congress) (as such Act was in effect on the day preceding October 20, 1994).”

You may want to check with your State educational agency to see if it has a staff person assigned to Impact Aid issues and, if so, that person may be familiar with the specifics regarding any Indian lands in your State.

E-10. Can HHS tell a State how much CCDF tribal funding has come to our State since 2007? Where can a State find the number of children who are served with tribal CCDF Funds?

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) posts the allocations for tribal CCDF grantees at

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/law/allocations/tribal.htm>.

Tribal CCDF grantees’ allocations are based on a count of the number of children in the tribal service area. Tribal grantees also track the number of children they serve. However, at this time, ACF does not post that information publicly. We recommend that States contact the Tribes within their State if they wish to include that information in their application.

F. Kindergarten Entry Assessments

F-5. What is the relationship between selection criterion (E)(1) and Competitive Preference Priority 3 (on Kindergarten Entry Assessments)?

In order to meet Competitive Preference Priority 3, a State must demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Table (A)(1)-12 are met, OR address (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum available points for that criterion. States are not required to address the competitive priorities in their applications, but if they do address and meet the priorities, they may earn additional points. In Focused Investment Area (E), States must choose to address at least one selection criterion. If a State does not yet have a fully implemented Kindergarten Entry Assessment in its State and chooses to focus on a Kindergarten Entry assessment as one of its focused investment areas, it may choose to write to selection criterion (E)(1). If reviewers determine that the application meets the selection criterion and earns a score of at least 70 percent of the points available for that criterion, then the applicant will earn additional points under Competitive Preference Priority 3. If a State has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) and indicates that in Table (A)(1)-12, it will have addressed Competitive Preference Priority 3 and need not separately choose to address selection criterion (E)(1). (For full details regarding the scoring of Competitive Preference Priority 3 and additional information on selection criteria and competitive preference priorities, see FAQ B-2.)

G. Budget

G-1a. How may States distribute funds to local programs if States are not allowed to subgrant under the RTT-ELC grant?

As outlined in FAQ G-1, States are not permitted to subgrant funds under this program. States may distribute RTT-ELC grant funds to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, including faith-based organizations, through memoranda of understanding (MOUs), interagency agreements, contracts, or other mechanisms authorized by State procurement laws. Applicants should talk with their State procurement offices or financial offices to find out what mechanisms are available and allowable in their State.

G-6. May States have one master MOU that multiple agencies sign?

Yes. There are two approaches States may take; either approach is fine. In the first approach each Participating State Agency (PSA) would execute its own MOU, including a scope of work, with the Lead Agency. In the second approach there would be one master MOU that would be executed by each PSA, and then individual scope-of-work exhibits would be attached for each PSA. That is, if an applicant submits one master MOU, the master MOU must be signed by each PSA and the applicant must include in the master MOU a separate scope of work for each PSA.

G-7. If one Participating State Agency (PSA) administers funds for multiple programs, does the PSA need to sign multiple MOUs?

No. One PSA may sign one MOU that indicates its multiple responsibilities for different programs within the administrative authority of the agency. Each agency head or its authorized representative must sign an MOU on behalf of his or her agency. The goal of the MOU is to make clear the roles, responsibilities, and activities of each agency under the State Plan and to show the commitment of each agency to that plan.

G-8. How should MOUs be handled if the Lead Agency administers funds for multiple programs that are listed in the definition of Participating State Agency?

Each applicant must submit preliminary scopes of work for each Participating State Agency as part of an executed MOU or other binding agreement between the State's Lead Agency and each Participating State Agency. Each preliminary scope of work must describe the portions of the State's proposed State Plan that the Participating State Agency is agreeing to implement. In a State where the Lead Agency administers funds for multiple programs that are listed in the definition of "Participating State Agency," the Lead Agency would outline its responsibilities as they relate to all listed programs that it administers. The scopes of work must make clear what roles and responsibilities the Lead Agency has under the State Plan for each of the programs listed in the definition of "Participating State Agency." The programs, agencies, and entities that are required participants under the definition of "Participating State Agency" and, therefore, must be reflected in scopes of work include agencies that

administer or supervise the administration of the following: the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF); section 619 of part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); part C of IDEA programs; State-funded preschool; home visiting; Title I of the ESEA; the Head Start State Collaboration Grant; and the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant; as well as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care; the State's Child Care Licensing Agency; and the State Education Agency.

H. Application Submission Procedures

H-4. Recommended page numbers are provided throughout the application. Will an application be penalized for exceeding the recommended page numbers?

The recommended page lengths for narratives and appendices are not binding limits. Applicants will not be penalized for exceeding them. But keep in mind, from a reviewer's point of view, clarity matters and brevity will be appreciated.

I. Transparency, Accountability, Reporting, and Other Obligations

I-4. May a State apply to receive both an RTT-ELC grant and an Early Childhood FY12 Statewide, Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant under the Institute of Education Sciences competition?

Yes. The two competitions are independent and results of one will not affect the results of the other. States may apply under both competitions and may receive funding under both competitions if their applications are selected for awards under the separate competitive review processes.